



ASHPOfficial - Managing the Transition from Front Line to Leadership
Transcript

Speaker 1:

Welcome to the *ASHPOfficial* Podcast, your guide to issues related to medication use, public health, and the profession of pharmacy.

Evan Williams:

Thank you for joining us for the Pharmacy Leadership Podcast. Our discussion for this podcast series focuses on leadership topics within pharmacy practice, including the business of pharmacy development of leadership skills, career transitions, and more. My name is Evan Williams and I am an Inpatient Clinical Manager at the University of Kansas health system. And I'll be your host for today's leadership podcast. With me today is Lucy Stan from the University of Kansas health system and Bill Kernan from Cleveland Clinic for Florida. Lucy is a Clinical Coordinator for Critical Care in the emergency department. And Bill is the Executive Director of Pharmacy. Thanks for joining us, Lucy and Bill. Today, we'll be discussing the transition from frontline staff position into a leadership role. Both of you are at different stages in your career, but you've each had personal experience with this topic. So we're really excited to hear your insights. Lucy, you and I work really closely at the University of Kansas health system. I know you've been in your current role about five years, but do you mind describing for our listeners your current position and what you had been doing prior to moving into that role?

Lucy Stan:

Yes, so as Evan said, I am the Clinical Coordinator at University of Kansas health system. And so essentially what that means is that I oversee our Critical Care Ed service line and the frontline pharmacists that work in those primary areas. So in this role, I still staff about 25% on average, most months of the year. Sometimes it ebbs and flows in terms of how busy I am. I'm also the Residency Program Director for the Critical Care Program here and also chair a couple of committees, both, inpatient pharmacy and health system based as well. Prior to my transition, I was a frontline pharmacist in the neuro ICU and medical transplant ICU primarily. But I floated through different ICS as well. So I did that for about four and a half years before transitioning into my current position now.

Evan Williams:

Great. Bill, kind of on the flip side, you're much more established as a pharmacy leader in the profession. Can you briefly share how your career path brought you to this point?



ASHPOfficial - Managing the Transition from Front Line to Leadership
Transcript

Bill Kernan:

Yes. Thank you, Evan. And, and very happy to be here. Yeah, so I completed PGY-1 residency. I'm now actually coming up on that being about 30 years ago, believe it or not. But after completing my residency, I really did direct patient care for a good I would say 10 to 15 years. I had been working as a critical care pharmacist. But I gradually over time took on more administrative responsibilities. I always have been drawn to aspects of departmental improvement improving pharmacy practice trying to really allow pharmacists to practice at the top of our license. So I was always really very drawn to that aspect of being able to make broad change. So it really kind of drew me into a more leadership aspect. So after practicing as a pharmacist for many, many years, I began to take on more administrative roles. I started doing more clinical coordination responsibilities. I started our PGY-1 residency here in Cleveland Clinic Florida.

And then ultimately I decided to follow the path of really a full time formal leadership role. I obtained my MBA and then started as an Assistant Director of pharmacy. I did the Assistant Director of pharmacy for about two to three years. And then the opportunity to move into the Director of pharmacy position opened up. So I took that and I did that for about five years to where I've been able to move into my current position as Executive Director of Pharmacy, where I oversee about five different hospital pharmacies and several retail as well as outpatient infusion pharmacies.

Evan Williams:

Awesome. Thank you both for sharing a little bit about your roles and how you got here today. Lucy, I know direct patient care is something that is still very important to you in your current role. But kind of walk us through that process of what went through your mind as you are considering giving up that full time patient care role. And how did that help you know when it was the right time for that change?

Lucy Stan:

Yeah. That's a really good question. And honestly I didn't know that it was the right time. The time that I transitioned to that role, the University of Kansas has a really long legacy of leadership. And so I'm tremendously lucky to be surrounded by individuals that have my best interest in mind but also know and understand what my strengths were even before I could recognize what my strengths were. And so at the time it was my direct supervisor that encouraged me to join certain committees and she needed help in something. So I was the first person she thought of and I excelled in those areas and the more I did it, I realized that I truly



ASHPOfficial - Managing the Transition from Front Line to Leadership
Transcript

love bedside care. But we don't always get these opportunities to impact patient care in a more global and experience in that. And when the time arose and there was a position available, I applied and it's kind of been a position I've held for the past five years now.

Evan Williams:

Bill, in your current role, I'm assuming you've promoted some frontline staff into leadership roles. What kind of qualities do you look for when kind of evaluating a frontline staff member? And is there anything you can do to almost groom them prior to the formal transition?

Bill Kernan:

Yeah, well, I think that there's there are a lot of key leadership competencies. I kind of boil it down to really two main things. The first is really the ability to just simply take ownership and really the growth, the improvement, the access, the success of the department. Does the person take initiative are they driven to get things done and to participate maybe where others are not? So it's sort of that I'm going to take ownership and get this thing done for the good of the department and for the good of our practice and profession.

So that's kind of the first key thing that I really look for. The second thing, and it is just as important, is really the ability for that person to really work with people. A leader has to have good people skills. There's a saying that management is about process while leadership is about people. And I think that's really true. And so if you're going to put a person into a leadership position, they have to be able to work with people. They've got to communicate well, they've got to be open to other people's viewpoints, and they've got to be humble. So they've got to have that aspect, I think combined with that really drive to want to work, to be able to get things done. And so to me, those are really the two key aspects. I think in bringing people along, the key there is that, and that you really just have to sit with them, be available and really work on a plan over the long term to identify some gaps and work with them on ways in which they can fill those gaps.

Evan Williams:

Lucy, when you transitioned into your current role, you didn't have any real formal leadership training. How were you successful in developing those skills on the job?

Lucy Stan:

So you're correct. I really didn't have any formal training. I essentially, it was just really lucky enough to have great examples at work that modeled characteristics that I wanted to emulate. A lot of it is also at the time that I transitioned. There was a lot of change in our leadership and so it really forced me to take a lot of autonomy and gain confidence in what I was doing. And, and



ASHPOfficial - Managing the Transition from Front Line to Leadership
Transcript

really trusting my gut. I remember one conversation to sort of piggyback off of Bill's comment with the prior question was that I was concerned that I didn't have these tangible, formal leadership qualities. I didn't know much about finance and I didn't know much about how to submit a time card or how to do certain handle certain HR issues. But I remember it, a director told me he was like, I can teach you all those things, but I can't teach you how to be a great listener. You already do that. I can't really teach you how to lead by example and be a people person. And so I think a lot to what Bill said, I think there are these tangible things that you can still learn in your job. And there are still things that are harder to learn that are innate traits within a leader.

Evan Williams:

Bill, you kind of touched on this on your previous answer, but how have you made sure new leaders are supported and successful when they transition into that type of role without that formal leadership background?

Bill Kernan:

Yeah. So what I really try to do is to make myself available and, and really be open, be transparent with them. You really want to be a mentor to them. So I would meet regularly with them, kind of set up a one-on-one monthly meeting with them, once I've identified them as somebody who has that strong potential to be able to be a leader because usually again, a lot of those gaps are sort of those technical skills that Lucy just mentioned. It might be not being familiar with some of the financial budgeting aspects or might not being familiar with some of the human resource related aspects, but if they have those intangibles, those ability to work with people, they have the drive, those things can be taught.

So then I think it just becomes really important to then sit down with them do sort of a self-analysis like: Hey, where are your gaps in these things? And how can we build upon those? I think you can challenge them give them maybe new initiatives to be able to lead, or perhaps there's a new project that comes up, that's a little bit out of their comfort zone. So you want to be able to give them those things, to see how they learn and how they react. But I think really it's meeting with them, it's identifying those things that they can build upon and then just helping them give those resources.

Evan Williams:

Have you had experience promoting a frontline staff member to a leadership role and how to not really work out how you expected? And I guess looking back on that situation, is there anything that you would have done differently?



ASHPOfficial - Managing the Transition from Front Line to Leadership
Transcript

Bill Kernan:

Yes. So that, that actually has happened before. That's a really good question. And when I go back and I think about why it didn't work out or, or what challenges I had it's really because, and in this particular example, the person who I brought up into that leadership role, they were very hard worker. They did excellent work. They were very proactive. I mean they were very good, but I overlooked the people aspects and the person was not really a great listener. They were not somebody that others could come to very easily.

And so I had overlooked that part and I think some of the overlooking that was a little bit of my own personal biases. So I think as a leader, if we're looking to bring up frontline staff, we've really got to make sure that we're stepping back and that we are very objective about it. And then also giving them their time to be able to put them into different settings or different environments or maybe having them work on new initiatives so that you can really see how well they do and it gives them, or gives you the ability to make a better evaluation.

Evan Williams:

Lucy, what advice do you have for a frontline staff member? Who's either newly in a position similar to how you were five years ago or has maybe considering taking one on as the next step in their career?

Lucy Stan:

I always say inventory the things that you've done in the past year and do a really good job of triaging what you find is value added and your development what you don't find value added. And the most important thing is what makes you nervous, excited. And so that's the one thing I always tell residents, students and other peers that want to maybe potentially transition into a new role or do something outside of what their comfort is do the things that make you nervous, excited. Those are the things that will challenge you and will likely make you better. And even if you end up not liking that experience, I don't think any time you will look back at those things that you will say that it still wasn't value added in terms of now versus you probably would never have known if you didn't try.

Evan Williams:

That's great advice Bill, anything you would like to add from your perspective?



ASHPOfficial - Managing the Transition from Front Line to Leadership
Transcript

Bill Kernan:

No, I mean, I completely agree with what Lucy said there could not agree more. There is another saying that I always think of and it's get comfortable being uncomfortable and it really just means that you've got to continuously challenge yourself into things that maybe you thought that you couldn't do. It's every opportunity that you come across where maybe you were uncomfortable you'd take it on and you accomplish it. But that process of going through that will help and prepare you for the next process. When I look back on what I have done say over the last, 10 to 20 years, I'm very surprised many times that I've been able to accomplish a lot of that.

I think if I went back and looked at it, and you would have told me that I would have accomplished all of these things. I probably would have told you that you're crazy. But, it's one step in front of the others. It's taking one thing at a time. And it is one challenge after the next challenge and each one prepares you for the next one. And so I think that's really how you have to look at it, but just get comfortable being uncomfortable and take those challenges on when the opportunity strikes you, you want to say yes. Even though you may not know exactly what I have to do to be able to accomplish this just take it head on and you will be able to accomplish it.

Evan Williams:

Well, that is all the time we have for today. I really want to thank Bill and Lucy for joining us to discuss *Managing the Transition from Front Line to Leadership*. I welcome everybody to join us here on Tuesdays, where we'll talk with ASHP members about leadership topics within pharmacy practice. Thanks for listening.

Speaker 1:

Thank you for listening to *ASHPOfficial*, the voice of pharmacists advancing healthcare. Be sure to visit [ASHP dot org forward slash podcast](https://www.ashp.org/podcast) to discover more great episodes, access show notes, and download the episode transcript. If you love the episode and want to hear more, be sure to subscribe, rate, or leave a review. Join us next time on *ASHPOfficial*.